

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

April 27, 2017

The Honorable Roy Blunt  
Chairman  
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on  
Labor, Health and Human Services,  
Education, and Related Agencies  
SG-136 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray  
Ranking Member  
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee  
on Labor, Health and Human Services,  
Education, and Related Agencies  
SG-136 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Tom Cole  
Chairman  
House Appropriations Subcommittee on  
Labor, Health and Human Services,  
Education, and Related Agencies  
2358-B Rayburn House Office Building

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro  
Ranking Member  
House Appropriations Subcommittee on  
Labor, Health and Human Services,  
Education, and Related Agencies  
2358-B Rayburn House Office Building

Dear Chairmen Blunt and Cole, and Ranking Members Murray and DeLauro,

As the Committee continues consideration of a FY2017 Continuing Resolution or Omnibus or FY2018 Appropriations legislation, we write to request that you continue the good work you have done in previous years, and strongly support the federal Pell Grant program. Specifically, we ask that you support measures to restore year-round access to Pell Grants.

As you are well aware, the Pell Grant is a vital resource for expanding access and affordability to higher education for some of America's most vulnerable and non-traditional students. In AY2013-2014, roughly 83% of Pell Grant recipients came from a household earning \$30,000 or less annually. Additionally, roughly 83% of first-time, full-time degree seeking students use federal financial aid, and 54.4% of students whose parents did not attend college used a Pell Grant to access higher education.

Access to Pell Grants is particularly important to students attending Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and other Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs). Around 70% of students attending an HBCU in 2017 will do so using a Pell Grant. During a recent Congressional fly-in of HBCU Presidents and Chancellors', year-round Pell garnered nearly unanimous support from those in attendance.

Giving students the opportunity to use a Pell Grant on a year-round basis provides an incentive to accelerate their degree and stay on track for graduation. Statistics show that first generation college students are more likely to take out loans to finance their education, and students who use financial aid, but do not graduate, are significantly more likely to fall behind on repaying education-related debt than those who graduate.

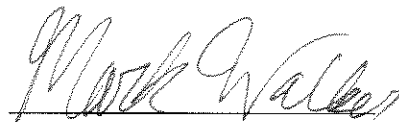
Providing access to year-round Pell has bipartisan support in Congress. We sincerely appreciate the subcommittee's leadership on this issue, as you voted last year to maintain funding for the maximum rate of an individual Pell Grant, and restore access to year-round Pell Grants for students who exhausted their grant award for an academic year. We commend your approach to supporting students who have already used a full year of Pell but plan to enroll in additional courses. This idea has also been included in bipartisan legislation introduced during the previous Congress by Chairman Alexander and Senator Bennet. Further, the idea of restoring year-round Pell was met with resounding support at the above-mentioned HBCU fly-in by a bipartisan group of Members of Congress.

Accessing Pell Grants over the course of a whole year enables students to stay on track, complete faster, enter the workforce sooner, and get out of school with less debt to pay back. We believe the time is now to make this change. We urge you to consider and adopt appropriate language in any Labor-HHS appropriations bill and give students the flexibility they deserve.

Sincerely,



Senator Tim Scott



Congressman Mark Walker

cc:

The Honorable Lamar Alexander, Chairman, U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

The Honorable Mike Enzi, Chairman, U.S. Senate Committee on the Budget

The Honorable Virginia Foxx, Chairwoman, U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Education and the Workforce

The Honorable Diane Black, Chairman, U.S. House of Representatives Committee on the Budget